

ABU ZAR AL-GAFFARI

SISTUL HASAN  
FAZIL-E-HÂSWI



# THE MESSAGE

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# ABU ZAR AL-GHAFARI : A SINCERE FRIEND

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## PART I

BY

*Molvi Syed Sibtul Hasan Saheb, Hansavi.*

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On the caravan route from Mecca to Syria and Palestine, that passes through rocky hills and sandy deserts, lived the Ghafar tribe of Kinani origin. The men of this tribe lived by pillaging and plundering the caravans that passed their way.

It was in this wild and unruly tribe that a son was born to Junadah ibn Qais and his wife Rabi'a who was destined to be the most truthful of all mortal men. His parents named him Jandab, but he is better known as Abu Zar.

In his childhood and youth his chief pre-occupation was to tend the flocks of sheep, goats and camels that grazed in the waste land and on the rocky slopes, but unlike other shepherds, he was a deep thinker and his reflective temperament helped him to learn the true lessons from Mother Nature, with the result that from the very outset he developed an aversion for the primitive beliefs and anti-social activities of his tribe. He consequently never worshipped his ancestral deities and



manmade gods.\*<sup>1</sup> Describing his own habit of worship Abu Zar says, "At night I used to stand up to adore the One God and would continue in meditation in this posture till the small hours of morning, after which I would throw myself on the ground where I would lie motionless like an inanimate object till the morning sun would cast its rays upon me."<sup>2</sup>

His fellow-tribesmen who must have hoped for Abu Zar to lead them in their marauding expeditions were disappointed to see him dissuade them from their unruly pursuits. It appears that he took strong exception to their raids during the "sacred months," for he says "We left our tribe as they permitted themselves to indulge in the unlawful."<sup>3</sup> So at last he left his home accompanied by his mother, Ramla<sup>4</sup> and his brother, Anis. He had a loving uncle who lived in another tribal habitat and so he went to his uncle who welcomed his sister and nephews, giving them the shelter which they sought. The uncle was impressed by Abu Zar's character and trusted him implicitly. But when the tribesmen saw this, they grew jealous of the newcomers. So one day, when the uncle returned from a hunt (for he often used to go hunting) the tribesmen complained to him that in his absence his nephews lorded it over the household and disturbed the domestic arrangements. The uncle thereupon questioned Abu Zar whose sensitive temperament could not stand this change of attitude and he replied, "You have contaminated the streams of your past kindness ; we cannot live together after this." Then he immediately took his mother and brother and riding on their camels they went away. 15

1 \* Hayat-ul Qulub ; Behar-ul-Anwar.

2 † Sahih Muslim ; Tabaqat by Ibn Sa'd ;

3 † Tabaqat by Ibn Sa'd ; Sahih Muslim.

4 † It appears that Ramla was his step-mother.

5 † Tabaqat ibn Sa'd ; Sahih Muslim.



### His Conversion and Missionary Zeal.

Abu Zar now headed for Mecca, but he did not enter the city. He stopped in a nearby village with the intention of taking up residence there. His brother, Anis was a successful poet who entertained passers-by with his poems. <sup>26</sup>

This was the time when the Holy Prophet had proclaimed his mission. He had already invited his kinsmen to accept the Truth and the new creed was being talked about. So a traveller who was returning from Mecca happened to meet Abu Zar and in the course of conversation, mentioned that a man had arisen in Mecca claiming to be the Apostle of God and to receive inspiration and exhorting people to worship none save the One God. <sup>27</sup> This aroused Abu Zar's curiosity, so that after asking many questions, he sent his brother Anis to make further inquiries. When Anis came back, Abu Zar asked him, "Why did you take so long?" and Anis replied "It took me a long time to meet the man. He does indeed teach virtuous ways. I listened to his revelations. It is certainly not poetry which he recites and he is not a priest either, for I have met hundreds of priests. This claimant of the Apostleship does not speak as priests do. Those who call him poet or priest are liars; I swear by God that he is a true Prophet. <sup>4</sup>" <sup>28</sup> On hearing this, Abu Zar decided to go and find out for himself. He went forth with only a skin of water and a basket full of *muql* \* to eat. Being a stranger to that city and not knowing where to go, he proceeded towards the Holy Ka'ba where he seated himself in a corner. Many of the Qureshites came in and out

<sup>6</sup> 2 Tabaqat ibn Sa'd ; Sahih Muslim.

<sup>7</sup> 3 Tabaqat ibn Sa'd,

<sup>8</sup> 4 Sahih Muslim ; Sahih Bokhari ; Sahih Tirmizi etc.—



of the sacred temple, but Abu Zar's self-confidence would not make them his guides to his goal. <sup>5</sup> <sup>9</sup> Days went by in this fruitless search. The *muql* fruits were exhausted and he had no money with which to buy anything to eat. Whenever he felt thirsty he would draw water from the well, Zamzam in the skin. At last, one day he asked a wayfarer, "Where does he live whom you call a heretic?". but this wayfarer was one of the pagans. He cried out at once, "Here is a heretic" upon which all the Qureishite pagans rushed at Abu Zar and beat him till he fainted. Recounting this incident, Abu Zar says, "I came to my senses again, but I looked like an idol whose face is besmeared with sacrificial blood." <sup>6</sup> <sup>10</sup>

But inspite of this beating, he did not give up the search. At last one day Ali passed by and seeing a stranger in a pitiable condition ( for so did Abu Zar appear ) invited him to his house. So Abu Zar passed the night in Ali's house but took care not to say a word about the object of his visit and next morning he returned to his sitting place in the precincts of the Holy Ka'ba. Again the next evening, Ali came and took Abu Zar to his house and again the latter dared not open his mouth. But the lonesome Abu Zar, noticed with surprise the kindness and hospitality shown by his host and wondered whether this young benefactor of his was the Prophet for he was certainly a virtuous man. But he had heard that the Prophet was over forty years of age. So he decided to ask his host who he was. But Ali did not come that night and Abu Zar passed another day not only in quest of the Prophet but of Ali also. Finally, Ali <sup>a</sup> come again and took

<sup>9</sup> <sup>5</sup> Fruit of the Bdellibm tree from which fragrant gum is made. Steingass' Persian English Dictionary.

<sup>10</sup> <sup>6</sup> Sahih Bokhari.



him home as before and as they were having dinner together, Ali opened the conversation. "What is it that brings you here and what do you seek? Tell me something about yourself." Thus encouraged, Abu Zar, asked Ali to promise that he would guide him. When he gave his pledge, Abu Zar continued, "I have heard that a man has arisen in your city who claims to be a divine Apostle. I have come to meet him". To which Ali replied, "Forsooth he is a true Apostle. I shall take you to him tomorrow". So the next morning Ali took Abu Zar to the Prophet's presence and Abu Zar greeted the Prophet saying "Peace unto thee, O messenger of God." This is the first occasion recorded in history when the Islamic greetings were offered. Then Abu Zar expressed his desire to hear some verses of the Divine Revelation and the Prophet recited a chapter of the Qur'an for him. Hardly was the recital over when Abu Zar exclaimed, "I testify that there is no god save One God and that Mohammad is His slave and messenger," and yelled for joy. \*<sup>11</sup> Then Abu Zar placed his hand in the Prophet's hand and took the pledge that he would never fear censure in God's path and would always proclaim the truth, howsoever disagreeable it may be. †<sup>12</sup>

There were only four Muslims in Mecca at the time when Abu Zar embraced Islam, bringing the number to five. Some historians even say that he was the third Muslim that is, he came into the fold immediately after Hazrat Khadija and Hazrat Ali. Those who place him fifth however say that his conversion took place after Khadija, Ali, Hamza and Ja'far, who taught him to recite

<sup>11</sup> \* Tbaqat ibn Sa'd.

<sup>12</sup> \* Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat-il As-hab; ibn Abdul Bir; Tabaqat ibn Sa'd Sahih Bokhari & Sahih Muslim.



the *Kalima*, or profession of faith. ‡<sup>13</sup> Some historians have mistakenly included Abu Bakr among the first Muslims, but this is wrong, as the famous historian, Mohammad ibn Jarir Tabari records :

“Mohammad ibn Sa’d once asked his father “Was Abu Bakr the first among you to embrace Islam” ? and the father replied. “No, because more than fifty persons embraced Islam before him.”<sup>14</sup>

Abu Zar however belongs to the first group of Muslims of whom the Our’an says :

In view of the courage and firmness shown by Abu Zar at such a stage when Islam was in its infancy, the Holy Prophet entrusted him with the duty of preaching. He said, “Will you convey my message to your people on my behalf, that haply God may benefit them through you and you may be rewarded by Him” ? Gladly did Abu Zar agree to go to his tribesmen as the first preacher of Islam.<sup>15</sup> A study of Abu Zar’s character will show what were the qualifications of a preacher of Islam in Mohammad’s judgment and how creditably Abu Zar conformed to them.

A preacher must be continent and unselfish. Accordingly, the Prophet called Abu Zar and said, “Will you take a pledge for something which will assure Paradise for you” ?

“Yes,” replied Abu Zar eagerly extending his hand.

“I charge you never to ask anyone to give you any thing” said the Prophet.

<sup>13</sup> ‡ Asad-ul-Ghaba ; Tarikh ibn Athir.

<sup>14</sup> || Allama Mohammad ibn Ya’qub Kulaini.

“Very well,” replied Abu Zar.

“Not even your own horse’s whip ; if it falls down you shall dismount and pick it up,” concluded the Prophet firmly and Abu Zar agreed. \*<sup>15</sup>

Says Abu Zar, ‘My beloved (i.e. the Holy Prophet) advised me to be kind to my neighbours. He said, “Oh Abu Zar, it is kindness to pick bones from the road-side ; or show the way to someone who is lost ; or to help those that are weak ; or to sleep with your wife.”’<sup>†16</sup> Then Abu Zar was fired with missionary zeal and said, “I shall not go to my own people without first proclaiming the truth in the Ka’ba, and saying so he proceeded thither. And when he entered the enclosure he saw many Qureshites assembled there. So, going into their midst he cried aloud, “There is no god save the One God and Mohammad is His messenger”. But how could the Qureshites tolerate to hear such words ? „Thou heretic ! Thou heretic” ! shouted they and pounced upon him and began to beat him. But amid the kicks, blows, stones and missiles that were aimed at him he continued to say, “There is no god save the One God and Mohammad is His messenger,” till at last Abbas passed by. Now Abbas had not openly professed Islam, but being a kind-hearted man he desired to save the poor stranger, so he said. “What are you doing ? Don’t you know that this man belongs to the Ghafar tribe through whose lands your caravans of trade have to pass” ? This advice proved effective. The Quresh withheld their hands and Abu Zar was saved.

<sup>15</sup> \* Tarikh Tabari, part II.

<sup>16</sup> † Musnad by Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

<sup>17</sup> † Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal.



### *His Service to Islam*

Thus our first preacher of Islam started from Mecca to guide his tribesmen. He first halted at the village where he had left his mother and brother. Anis asked him. "Well, what have you decided"? and he replied, "I have become a Mussulman." Anis had already imbibed the spirit of the new faith and so he said, "I also become a Mussulman from now." The two brothers then approached their mother and explained their faith to her. She said, "I have no disagreement with this religion and I also become a Mussulman in right earnest, testifying to the signs which both of you have seen."

It is not known how long they stayed in this village, but it is certain that before the Hegira Abu Zar returned to his native home and occupied himself with missionary work among his tribesmen,\* many of whom immediately accepted the Word while others promised to embrace Islam when the Prophet would come to Medinah.\*

A tribe known as Aslam dwelt nearby. They were friendly with the Ghafars. So Abu Zar went to preach among them and met with considerable success in that tribe also. Thus he remained busy with the work of spreading Islam, heedless of what happened in the world till 5 A.H., when he set forth to go to Madinah with tribes of Ghafar and Aslam whom he had converted. When they arrived in the Holy Prophet's presence he blessed them, saying :

"Ghafar, may God forgive them ; and Asalm, may God give them peace". †

No other tribe was thus honoured by the Holy Prophet and this distinction was attained by the two tribes

18 \* Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal vol. 5.

19 † Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

through Abu Zar's efforts. After some time the Aslams and Ghafars went back and Abu Zar remained in Medinah.

When the Holy Prophet established the ties of brotherhood among his followers, Abu Zar became the brother of Salman. One day, while he was sleeping in the mosque, the Holy Prophet came to him and waking him up, began to talk to him. "What will you do, when one day, you will be turned out of this mosque"? Said the Prophet in the course of the conversation and Abu Zar replied, "I shall draw my sword and strike off the head of the man who will turn me out."

"God bless and forgive Abu Zar," said the Prophet, then turning to him said, "No, you should remain patient and resigned. You should allow yourself to be carried whithersoever he may drag you." ‡

'One day,' says Abu Zar, "I came to the mosque. He said to me. "The time is fast approaching when Othman will become your enemy and you will become his enemy and whoever will transgress shall go to Gehenna." At this I asked, "Master, who will be the transgressor" ? and the Prophet replied, O Abu Zar, do thou always tell the truth, however disagreeable it may be, and abide thou by the vow that thou hast taken, till thou join me on the Day of Judgment. ||

### His Love of the Prophet.

He accompanied the Prophet on the campaign of Tabuk but his camel was so weak and old that he could not keep pace with the army and remained straggling

20 ‡ Sahih Muslim ; Sahih Tirmizi ; Sahih Bokhari, etc.

21 || Musnad, by Ahmad ibn Hanbal.



behind. At this, some of the Prophet's companions who were jealous of Abu Zar began to say that he had deserted them, but the Prophet knew Abu Zar and replied, "Let him do it. If he is a good man, God will bring him to me." Now, Abu Zar, when he saw that his camel could not move fast enough, dismounted, and carrying his baggage on his back set off on foot. So strong was his determination that he walked day and night without stopping for a moment, except to say his prayers, till at last he arrived within sight of the Prophet's cortege. The companions saw a solitary and weary man trudging along and said "Someone is coming," at which the Prophet said "It's Abu Zar, after all." As he came nearer, they all recognised him, but saw that he was fainting for thirst. So the Prophet ordered his disciples to go quickly and give him some water to drink. When he came near, they asked him why he did not drink water on the way, at which he told them that he had some water in his goblet, but did not drink it as he thought his Lord and master, the Holy Prophet might also be thirsty and therefore he was carrying the water for his master. The Prophet was deeply moved by this example of affection and said, "May God have mercy on you, O Abu Zar, I foresee that you shall live in a desolate place and die in loneliness, but a group of men from Iraq shall be blessed for they shall bathe and shroud your body and bury it." <sup>22</sup>

### HIS PLACE AMONG THE COMPANIONS

Abu Zar held a position of high esteem among the Prophet's companions. <sup>23</sup>When the Prophet went to the Battle of Zat-ul- Ruqa' he appointed Abu Zar the Emir of

<sup>22</sup> <sup>1</sup> Tarikh Tabari ; Behar-ul-Anwar.

<sup>23</sup> <sup>2</sup> Tabaqat, ibn Sa'd.

Medinah. The Holy Prophet once addressed him in the following terms : "Abu Zar, you are one of the people of my house." <sup>24</sup> And once he said "Under the blue dome of the sky and over the sandy earth there is no one who speaks more truthfully than Abu Zar." <sup>25</sup> He often referred to the Prophet as "My Beloved" or "My Friend," and after the Holy Prophet's death when he related something about him, he would be unable to contain the grief and would burst into tears. It was owing to this intense love which he bore that the Prophet said to him, "You will be with those whom you love," repeating the words three times. <sup>26</sup>

#### HIS REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE ABU BAKR.

He was among the few devoted followers who took part in the Holy Prophet's burial and along with Salman, Miqdad and Ammar Yasir, acknowledged Ali as the rightful Caliph. The ancient historian Salim ibn Qais (died in 70 A. H.) who was a follower of Ali and one of the earliest writers on Islam, records an address delivered by Abu Zar after the Holy Prophet's death exhorting people to follow the Prophet's family.

Another address which he delivered in the same period has been recorded by Tabraši as follows :—

"O people of Quresh, you ave done wrong in disregarding the Prophet's kinsfolk. I swear by God, the Arabs have turned away from the faith. They have changed their allegiance and belief. Had you but left the appointment of Caliph in the hands of the Prophet's family, no two parties would have drawn their swords against one another.

<sup>24</sup> 3 Behar-ul-Anwar ; Ani-ul-Aayat.  
<sup>25</sup> 4 Asad-ul-Ghaba ; Tarikh, ibn Athir.  
<sup>26</sup> 5 Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal.



Now that the Prophet's successor (Ali) has been deposed, he who seeks domination has secured your allegiance and the unworthy ones are aspiring to the Caliphate and blood is going to be shed in this contest.

O people, you are well aware that the Prophet has announced Ali to be his successor and after him Hasan and Husain and after them the Holy Descendants, but you have forgotten this command of the Prophet and are oblivious of the pledge that you had given.

You have sold that Paradise where youth never declines, where old age never comes, where blessings are eternal, and where sorrow is unknown, for the sake of this transient worldly life. It is a small and temporary price which you have taken. A similar treatment was meted out to the children of the Prophets of yore and those who opposed the children of their Prophets and corrupted the faith became disbelievers. You are following the same people. You have also transgressed in turning away from the Prophet's family and his commands. But the time will come soon when all of you will be punished by destruction for the evil that you are doing." †

Thus Abu Zar obeyed the Prophet who had said to him, "Always tell the truth, howsoever unpleasant it may be" ‡ and continued to proclaim what he believed.

27 \* Ihtijaj, by Tabrasi,

28 † Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

## ABU-ZAR AL-GHAFARI : THE SINCERE FRIEND

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### PART II.

BY

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*Moulvi Syed Sibte-ul-Hasan Hansavi Saheb,*

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Abu Zar was one of the few friends who attended the burial of the Holy Prophet's only daughter, Fátima, (1) as she had made a will that no one except Ali, Hasan, Salman, Abu Zar and Miqdad should join her funeral. Emir Shekib Erselan writes, "There is no doubt that Abu Zar was among the friends of the Prophet's house and partisans of Ali, and was among those who did not vote for Abu Bakr on the day of election." (2).

All the Islamic History books show that Abu Zar, Miqdad, Boraida Aslami, Ubiy ibn Khozaima ibn Thabit, Mitham ibn Taiyahan, Sehlibn Hanif, and Abu Ayyub were among those disciples of pure Arab stock who maintained that the right to the Caliphate belonged only to the Holy Prophet's descendants and these persons expressed this belief by protesting against the selection of Abu Bakr from the very first day. (3)

Throughout the reign of the first Caliph Abu-Zar lived in Medina but, as some historians relate, in the early

1 Wife of Ali and mother of Hasan and Husain.

2 Hadir-ul-'alam-ul-Islami (Moderan World of Islam) by Shekib Erselan, Cairo.

3 In view of this unanimous evidence of history is there any truth left in the propaganda that the legitimist view is a product of berisia !



part of the Second Caliph's reign he went away to Syria, (4) where he lived till he was captured and brought to Medina, but by following the historical accounts more closely it becomes evident that though he certainly did migrate to Syria owing to unfavourable circumstances in the early days of Omar's reign, he used to visit Medina off and on, and consequently he happened to be in Medina when Othman became Caliph. One of the reasons for his stay in Syria was that as the government of that province had been entrusted to the Omayyades by Omar, and the Omayyades were corrupting the teachings of Islam, Abu Zar, realising his duty as the first missionary of Islam and remembering the charge which the Holy Prophet had placed in his hands could not have remained a silent spectator. So, with Ali's permission he migrated to Syria to spread the true message of Islam in far-away lands. The introduction of Shiaism into the Jebel-'Amil dates back to that period and the followers of the Prophet's household in Syria became known as *mutwali* since that time. (5)

As already mentioned, Abu-Zar was in Medina at the beginning of the third Caliph's reign. But Medina was not the same as it was in the days of the Holy Prophet. Abu Zar himself says, "O ye folk ! I shall be nearer to the Prophet on the Day of Judgment than all others because I have heard him say, 'He who will depart from the world in the same condition in which I leave him shall be nearest me,' and by Allah, there is no one among you now who is in the same condition and who is not entangled in some innovation except myself." (1) But such were the

4 Isti'ab ; Ibn Abdul-Bir ; Asad-ul-Ghaba and Ibn Athir.

5 Hadir-ul-'Alam-ul-Islam, chapter on the Origin of Shiaism, by Shekib Erselan.

1 Tabaqat ibn Sa'd ; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

times that even in Medina Abu-Zar had to introduce himself to his audience. The famous ancient historian Ibn Wadih Al-Ya'qubi (died in 278 A. H.) writes :

Standing outside the door of the mosque Abu Zar spoke as follows :—"O ye folk ! Who knows me, knows me, and who does not know me let him know that I am Abu-Zar, Al-Ghafari and my name is Jondab ibn Janadah. Verily, God has chosen Adam and Noah and the children of Abraham and 'Imran above all the people of the world and Mohammad and his children are the purest of the descendants of Noah and Abraham. The Prophet's Kinsmen are the guides of all creation ; the honour and greatness that men have attained today are due to them ; they are high as the heavens, shining like the sun, luminous like the moon, they are like stars to guide you through darkness—like mountains fixed upon the earth ; they are like the invisible Ka'ba (2)—like the burning bush aflame with Divine Light. Our Lord Mohammad is the heir to the wisdom of Adam and the distinctions of all the Prophets and the heir to Mohammad is Ali ibn Abu Talib.

O ye disciples, that are confused and worried after the Prophet's demise, had you given precedence to that person whom God gave precedence and subordinated those whom God subordinated, and had you allowed the inheritance of Islamic government and the Prophet's inheritance to devolve upon the Prophet's kindred you would have been covered from head to foot with God's unlimited blessings ; no friend of God would have remained poor or destitute ; no act of faith would have been useless, and no two persons would have disagreed on any of the Divine commandments because they would have received every commandment

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2 Alluding to the heavenly Throne of God.



from the Prophet's kinsmen according to the Book of God and the Sunna. But now that you have paid no heed to this matter and done what your (misleading) desires let you do, then endure what your evil hands have accomplished" ! (3)

This was the bitter truth which no one dared proclaim in those days, as Ali used to say, "There is no one now except Abu Zar who dares to speak on religious matters without fearing rebukes and taunts." (4)

But when Othman came to know of this speech, he banished Abu Zar from Medina and sent him to Syria (5) hoping that the strict surveillance of Moawiyah would prevent him from making such speeches. But the venerable companion of the Prophet continued to speak in the same strain as before. It was his custom to go and stand near the city gate daily after the morning prayers and watch the trains of camels laden with the riches of the east for Moawiyah and his courtiers go past him endlessly. There, pointing to the camels he used to say, "These trains of camels are bringing loads of hell-fire ! The curse of God be on those who have given up doing the good acts that have been ordained and who commit the sins that have been forbidden." (6)

He used to preach in the Jum'a Mosque of Damascus, in the market place and near the palace gates of the noblemen in the same strain. A typical example of those speeches of his is reproduced as follows :—

"O wealthy men, O pawnbrokers ! Help the poor and behave kindly towards the indigent. Listen ! God Almighty sayeth, ' Those who store up gold and silver and

3 Tarikh Ya'qubi.  
4 Tabaqat, Ibn Sa'd.

5 Tarikh Ya'qubi.  
6 Tarikh Ya'qubi.

expend it not in God's way,—give them glad tidings of grievous woe ! On the day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, and their brows shall be branded therewith, and their sides and their back !—‘This is what ye stored up for yourselves, taste then what ye stored up’ ! (Ch. IX v. 35-36).

At this Moawiyah forbade all citizens from sitting with Abu Zar or listening to his speeches or talking to him, (1) but Abu Zar's missionary zeal was unabated. He used to say “As long as any portion of the true message remains to be conveyed I shall not give up preaching, even if the edge of a sword be placed upon my throat.” (2)

As a result of Abu Zar's preaching, the poor people developed an interest in life and the rich were compelled to spend all that they had. (3)

On seeing this Moawiyah wrote to Othman saying, “You have made a serious mistake in sending Abu Zar here. The Syrians are being worked up against you and disorder is spreading,” whereupon Othman ordered Moawiyah to capture Abu Zar and send him to Medina on the bare back of a jerky camel. The order was promptly carried out with the result that when Abu Zar reached Medina his thighs were very badly bruised and wounded. When Abu Zar was taken to the Caliph's court, the Caliph Othman said, “I have received a report saying that you relate a tradition of the Prophet to the effect that when the Omayyades will be thirty in number they will appropriate God's wealth to themselves, they will treat the slaves of God as their own slaves and will look upon God's faith

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1 The Sehah (Six reliable books of Hadith).

2 Tarikh Tabari.

3 Tarikh Ya'qubi ; Muruj-ul-Zahab, Mas'udi.



as a fraud," to which Abu Zar replied, "Indeed I have heard the Messenger of God say so." Then the Caliph turned round to his courtiers and asked whether any of them had heard the Prophet say so. Then he summoned our Lord Ali and asked him the same question and when Ali verified the statement, Othman asked what was the proof, so Ali quoted the tradition of the Prophet who said, that there was no one under the sky or on the earth more truthful than Abu Zar. But notwithstanding this Abu Zar was banned from relating any tradition of the Prophet, but Abu Zar continued to proclaim the truth. So only a few days later Othman sent word to Abu Zar saying, "By Allah, you will be deported from Medina and sent to Rabza for life."

Thereupon the Caliph ordered Merwan to turn Abu Zar out and prohibited everyone from meeting him or talking to him, and Merwan took Abu Zar and his wife and children and made them ride on a camel and sent them out of Medina. As the outlawed family set out, our Lord Ali accompanied by Hasan Abdullah ibn Ja'far, Aqil and Ammar Yasir went to the outskirts of Medina to see them off. As they went along, Merwan said to Ali, "The Caliph has prohibited everyone from talking to this man," but Ali said, "Away with you!" and whipped Merwan's ass so that it carried him far away. \*

The parting words of Abu Zar when he bade farewell to the prophet's kinsmen deserve mention. He said, "The Mercy and Blessings of God be on you, O people of the Prophet's house, and may my father and mother be your ransom! Othman did not tolerate to let me live in Medinah just as my stay in Syria was unwelcome to Moawiyah.

\* Tarikh Yaqubi.

Othman swore that he would transport me from Medinah. I asked him to send me to Kufa, but he was terrified lest I might arouse opposition among the people of Kufa, so he swore to intern me in a place where I may find no friend or sympathiser. But verily, I swear that I seek no friend except God. While He is with me I do not fear solitude or loneliness. He is sufficient for all my affairs. There is no Master save Him. On Him do I depend who is powerful over all. Peace unto Mohammad and the people of his house ! ”

At last the oppressed and persecuted Abu Zar arrived at his journey's end, there to live alone without friend or companion until death. He felt sorry above all to part with the tomb of his beloved leader and guide, the Holy Prophet and from his family. His livelihood here depended on a few goats and sheep which he tended.

One day two servants of Othman brought him two hundred dinars and said, “The Caliph has sent this money for your expenses.” Abu Zar asked them, “Has he given the same amount of money to every Mussulman.”

“No,” replied the servants.

“I am no different from any other Mussalman,” said the straightforward man, “and it is not permissible for me to take any more than that which is given to other Mussulmans.”

Thus, after some argument he refused the money, though he stood badly in need of it and he said “Take away these dinars and tell him that I have no use for them or for your wealth. When I shall appear before my Creator, He will judge between me and Othman ! ” ‡

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‡ Rijal Kashshi.



In this wise did Abu Zar pass his days with patience and thanks-giving, nor did he neglect the work of preaching, for whenever any traveller or pilgrim passed that way, he used to teach him the true faith and relate the traditions he used to write letters to friends whom he knew to be true followers of the faith. For instance, he once wrote a letter to Hozaiifa Yemani. The letter which has been recorded by Majlisi runs as follows :—

“My brother,

You are one of those from whom I seek solace by relating my sorrows and complaining against the cruel men have joined together to persecute me. My eyes saw the wicked deeds of these wicked men, my ears heard the lies told and I refuted them. Then they deprived me of all my rights and deported me from place to place, separating me from my friends and brothers and from the Holy Prophet's sepulchre. But I seek refuge from my Lord, the Almighty lest this may become a complaint against the lot that has befallen me. I only desire to let you know that I am resigned unto the fate which my Creator has decreed for me. I have disclosed these facts to you in order that you may pray to the Almighty to give comfort to me and to all Muslims—to bless us with increasing benefit and a happy end. Peace unto oou” !

Thus he spent his sorrowful days with submission and resignation. But there were many more sorrows in store for him. His son died in the prime of life leaving the aged father to lament over him. The son's name was “Zar” on account of which he had come to be known as Abu-Zar. There, standing beside the newly-made grave he addressed the dead youth in the following words :

“O Zar, may God have mercy on thee. Thou wast kind to thy parents and wellbehaved. I was well pleased with thee ere thou left this world. I received no harm from thee.

I do not desire anything from anyone except God I hope for no benefit from anyone that I may feel sorry when it is taken away, but considering the things that happen after death I wish I had been in thy place. It is this thought that draweth me towards thee, By Allah, I bemoan thy loss, nor for my sake but for thine—would that I had known what questions have been asked from thee and what answers thou hast given. (1)

Lord ! thou didst ordain certain duties from me to my son and certain duties from my son to me ; my Lord, I forego all that I was entitled to receive from him, do Thou also forego them and forgive, for Thou art the most Forgiving.” (2)

In the end, overburdened with grief and weakened by woeful suffering, the venerable companion of the Holy Prophet fell ill. The time for the Hajj was near at hand, the month of Zul-Hejja had begun and pilgrims from all over the Muslim world were on their way to the Holy City. Even the watchmen who were stationed at Rabza to guard the internees went away to Mecca. Just then a group of pilgrims, passing through Rabza on its way to Mecca came to see Abu Zar. The pilgrims asked, “What aileth thee, O Abu Zar, and who hath wronged thee” ?

1 Alluding to the Islamic belief that after death everyone is asked questions regarding his or her faith,

2 Al-kharaj-wal Jaraih. by Ibn Ravindi ; Tafsir, by Ali ibn Ibrahim Al-Qummi-



"My sins," replied Abu Zar.

"What desirest thou" ? continued the sympathisers.

"Mercy from the Lord, my God," answered the sick man. "If thou wishes so, we may call a physician for thee," said they.

"God is my physician ; He who hath made me fall ill shall also cure me," retorted Abu Zar and so the pilgrims sadly arose and went away.

Soon afterwards came the days of the Hajj. The pilgrims were performing the rites and the caravan routes were deserted. Loneliness and desolation reigned all round—not a soul stirred. (3) In the midst of this dreary wilderness, Abu Zar lay, his head resting on a mound of sand, his daughter sitting nearby, gazing with despair on her dying father and weeping silently.

"Why dost thou weep, my child" ? asked the father at last.

"Father," sobbed the girl, "what shall I do in this wilderness without friend or helper" ?

"Despair not," said the venerable companion, "Verily, my beloved, the Messenger of Allah said that after my death a caravan of the faithful from Iraq shall pass by and these men shall wash and shroud my body and place it in the greve. My child ! go, kill a goat and cook its meat, for our guests are coming soon, when they have buried my body thou shouldst invite them and shouldst not let them mount upon their camels without haveing eaten." 1

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3 Isti'ab, by Ibn Abd-ul-Bir, vol. 4

1 Tarikh Tabari, vol. 5.

A short while later, the dying man again said to his daughter, "Go and wait by the wayside and if anyone should pass by, tell him about my condition".

The poor girl obediently waited by the wayside till at last she saw dust rising in one direction and then she saw a train of camels hastening towards her. In a moment they approached near her and stopped, full of surprise to see a girl standing all by herself in the wide wilderness. They began to question her, "What are you doing here, my good girl—what mishap hath befallen thee"?

"O Muslims," replied she, "a lonely stranger is dying here".

"And who is he?" they enquired.

So she said "He is Abu Zar."

On hearing this they jumped down from their camels, exclaiming "What, Abu Zar? may our lives be sacrificed for him."

When these welcome guests went to Abu Zar, he spoke to them in a faint voice, saying, "Glad tidings unto ye! My beloved hath prophesied concerning ye, that a group of Muslims shall perform my burial rites." Then, continuing as if in a soliloquy, "Would that I had a piece of cloth wherewith to cover my body and make my own shroud. But it is not God's will." Then turning again to the visitors he concluded. "I charge ye upon your faith,—and this is my dying wish—that he who giveth me my shroud should be neither a governor of any province nor an officer of the State." (2)

So saying, the noble companion of the Holy Prophet showed signs of passing away.



“At this juncture, relates his daughter, “He addressed the angel of death in the following words :

“Bravo, my friend ! You have come at a time when I was waiting for you. May he who feels remorseful on meeting you never be emancipated. O God, give me a place in the neighbourhood of Thy Mercy. O God, I swear by Thy right—and Thou knowest all things—that I have always been desirous of meeting with Thee and I have never disliked death. O Lord ! In Thy name, and praying for Thy help, and believing in Thy Messenger do I go to Thy presence.”

So saying, he breathed his last.

Historians are agreed that he died in 32 A. H. (1) It is also stated that Malik Ashtar, and Hajar bin Adi, were among the visitors who buried him and recited the funeral prayers over him. Other reports say that Abdullah ibn Mas'ud was also among them.

As the visitors were about to go away, Abu Zar's daughter, remembering her father's wishes, invited them to the dinner which she had prepared for them.

So ends the story of the companion who obeyed the Prophet implicitly till death and who realised his ambition which was to rejoin the Holy Prophet in the same pure and virtuous condition in which he left him.

The Historians of Islam regard Abu Zar among the most learned men. (2) Hafiz Abu Na'im acknowledges that he was the first Muslim thinker to develop the philosophy of life and death. (3) Hazrat Ali himself says that Abu Zar

1 Mo'jam-ul-Buldan ; Yaqut Hamavi ; Tarikh Khamis. Dayarbakri ; Mara't-ul-Jinan, Yafe'i.

2 Tarikh Khamis ; Dayarbakri.

3 Hilyat-ul-Aulia ;

acquired such a vast knowledge and profound wisdom that others found too difficult to understand." (4) In another book Hazrat Ali is reported to have said, "Abu Zar encompassed knowledge all around. His quest for it was insatiable. He questioned the Holy Prophet more often than any other man and the Holy Prophet continued to instruct him always." (5) Abu Zar is regarded as one of the earliest writers on Islamic subjects. He is known to have written a detailed history of the events that took place after the Holy Prophet's death." (6)

The source-books of the Shi'as are full of the traditions and teachings of Abu Zar and the lengthy sermons and charges which he received from the Holy Prophet and preserved for our benefit are specially worth mentioning. The traditions reported by Abu Zar are found in the books of Sunnis as well. Mohammad Ismail Bokhari alone records some 281 traditions from Abu Zar.

His family consisted of a wife who lived with him till the end and was the mother of many children out of whom three, *i. e.* a daughter and two sons lived to maturity. One of his sons, named "Zar," died in his lifetime as already mentioned. The other son, named Abdul-Malik relates many traditions of Hazrat Ali and is often mentioned in the Shi'a books of "Rijal." 7

He also owned a slave, named "Jaun" whom he liberated, But Jaun continued to live with his master even after being set free. After Abu Zar's death he served the household of the Prophet and was killed at Karbala where he fought on the side of Imam Husain.

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4 Majalis-ul-Mo'minin, by Nur-ullah Shustari.

5 Tabaqat, by Ibn Sa'd.

6 Al-Fihris, by Al-Tusi Rijal, by Najjashi.

7 Rijal is a subject which deals with the biographies of the reporters of traditions.

